

Trading Patterns in the Nepal Himalayas: The Case of Walongchung Gola *

Heiko Schrader

1. Introduction

More than one decade has passed, since Prof. Fürer-Haimendorf published his 'Himalayan Traders', an inspiring ethnographic 'Lebenswelt' description. This author refers to different high altitude dwelling communities being or having been engaged in trans-Himalayan trade. The term 'trading communities', however, is misleading as far as it implies:

- First, of all, groups making their living primarily by trade. Like Fürer-Haimendorf rightly points out, these communities conduct(ed) a mixed economy of agriculture, animal husbandry, and trade, the latter source of income being only one means among others.
- Secondly, more or less, egalitarian, unstratified groups in which all households have the same ability to get access to trade, and follow rather the same pattern of trade. However, these patterns, found among the different 'trading communities', are very complex.

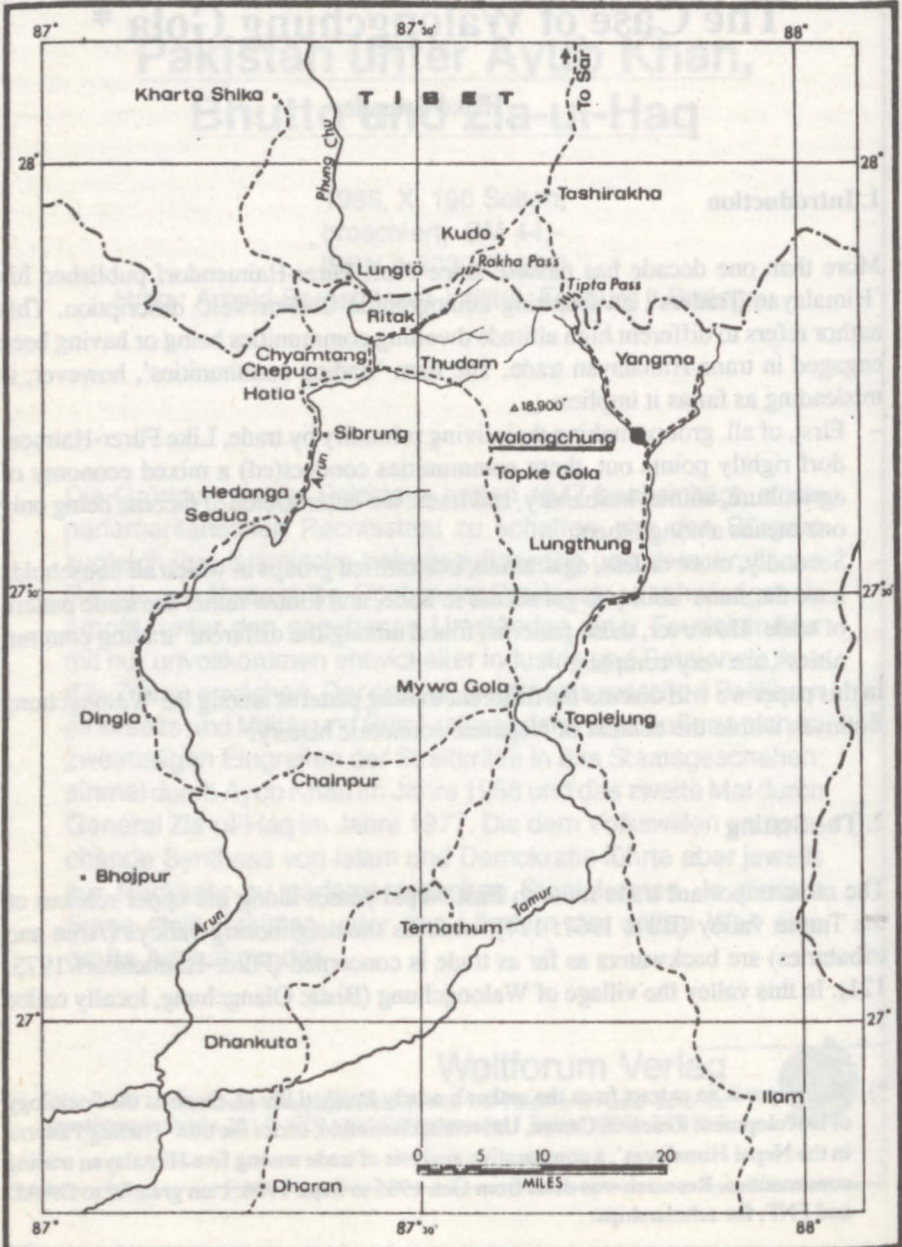
In this paper we will discuss the different trading patterns among the Walongchung Bothiyas within the context of Nepalese economic history.

2. The Setting

The most important trade route in East Nepal passes along the upper reaches of the Tamur valley (Bista 1967: 174), whereas the neighboring valleys (Arun and tributaries) are backwaters as far as trade is concerned (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 121). In this valley the village of Walongchung (Bista: Olangchung, locally called

*) This paper is an extract from the author's nearly finished Ph. D.-thesis at the Sociology of Development Research Centre, Universität Bielefeld, under the title 'Trading Patterns in the Nepal Himalayas', a comparative analysis of trade among five Himalayan trading communities. Research was done from Oct. 1985 to Sept. 1986. I am grateful to DAAD and FNF, for scholarships.

Fig. 1: Walongchung Gola (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 107)



Holung, op.cit.: 174) is situated in the region of Walongchung Gola at an altitude of about 12,000ft. This village acted not only just as an interregional trading entrepot between Tibet and East Nepal, successful Walongchung traders also went as far as Calcutta, the main British-Indian entrepot for exports to Europe, and Shigatse, a merchants' town in Tsangpo valley, to make business.

Walongchung is up to the 1950s comparable in its importance with Namche Bazar in Khumbu and Tukche in Western Nepal (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 121). Trade through Walongchung must have been even more profitable than that through Khumbu, because the route along the Tamur valley and across the Tipta La (the border pass between Tibet and Nepal with an altitude of 16,620 ft) is easier to use than the trail leading through Khumbu and across Nangpa La (over 18,000 ft, op.cit., 125)

We do not have any precise data concerning the trade volume, but if we make a comparison similar to that of Fürer-Haimendorf, we come to the conclusion, that Walongchung Gola trade was much more significant than Khumbu trade, not only due to the easier route. As we already mentioned Nepal enjoyed a monopolistic position in trans-Himalayan trade up to the late 19th century, and the Tamur route was the closest one from Calcutta to Tibet via Nepal. Macro-economic history shows us that Tibet, Nepal, Sikkim and British-India struggled over territory which nowadays belongs to East Nepal, for more than a century. As the question of the territorial status of Walongchung Gola is important for its later development into a trade centre, we will discuss in short the political history of East Nepal.

2.1. Political History

Towards the end of the 18th century the unification of Nepal took place under the Gorkhali ruler Prithvi Narayan Shah. As the Kinloch and Logan mission (see Uprety 1980: 24-29) failed, the British, totally dependent on the cooperation of the Kathmandu rulers, tried to open up new trade channels in order to get access to the Tibetan markets without passing through Nepalese territory and paying the always fluctuating, non-standardised duties. With this objective in mind they first of all contacted the Rajah of Morang, one of the old kingdoms and chiefdoms in present East Nepal, with the goal of opening up the route via Dhankuta and Walongchung to Tibet. The conquest of Morang and Darjeeling by Prithvi Narayan Shah between 1773 and 1774, however, also blocked this route, so that Prithvi Narayan was able to gain control over the Walongchung pass (Uprety: 31).

In 1775 A. D. Nepal expanded further eastward and attacked Sikkim. The Tibetans were quick to offer assistance to the Sikkimese (as their rajah was a disciple

of the Dalai Lama) and though the latter refused help in form of troops they accepted food supplies (Uprety 1980: 27f.). After the sudden death of Prithvi Narayan in the same year an agreement on trade regulations was signed, between Tibet and Nepal, by the successor of Prithvi Narayan, Singha Pratap Shah and the border was fixed at Kankai river. One of the Nepalese interests was secured. Tibet accepted a stop of their eastern trade through Walongchung and agreed to conduct trade through Kerong and Kuti (32), the main frontier crossing points for trade via Kathmandu. As already mentioned, the easiest trans-Himalayan routes to control were those leading from India via Hetauda and Kathmandu – the administrative centre – to the passes of Kuti and Kerong, the lowest frontier crossing points between Nepal and Tibet. Also on these routes, economic surplus from trade could be easily extracted by the Nepalese state.

After the second Nepal-Tibetan war and the Nepalese defeat in 1791 A. D., the boundary between Nepal and Sikkim was fixed as the eastern bank of the Tista river. In 1817 the British government restored this country to the Sikkimese Rajah, and the new boundary was drawn back from the Kankai river, the boundary after 1775, to the Mechi river (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894, repr. 1972: 18) which forms the present boundary.

It is difficult to determine to which country the kingdoms and chiefdoms of the present East Nepal were affiliated before the Nepalese conquests. It is, however, reasonable to assume that Nepal, Tibet, Sikkim and British India all had some economic and military interest in this area and especially in strategic points like Walongchung pass (Tipta La). In many Tibet-Nepalese disputes from 1750 onward this pass played a very important strategic role (for details see Uprety 1980). The question of territorial status was at the end, however, not decided by military affairs, but by the Walongchung peoples themselves (see below).

As late as the end of the 19th century the British were successful in getting direct access to Tibet by constructing the new Phari route, and Tibet and India began direct trade relations without Nepal as intermediary. By 1900 the new Phari route succeeded in capturing the volume of trade moving across the two twin routes of Kerong and Kuti. Kalimpong replaced Kathmandu as the center of trans-Himalayan trade. In short, Nepal's monopolistic position in the trans-Himalayan trade was lost (Uprety 1980: 165)

Furthermore, the Tibetan government took political revenge for the long lasting commercial dependency on Nepal and issued trade regulations that caused a further decline in trade. In this way also the trans-Himalayan trade via Walongchung was hindered and even temporarily stopped (see document 4, Appendix). By threatening war, Nepal managed to get some of the new Tibetan regulations abolished, saving the livelihood of Nepalese traders. Trade, however, was still subjected to wider

ranging restrictions, and Nepal and her traders would never regain the commercial privileges in Tibet that they had previously enjoyed.

Through the example of Walongchung Gola we want to demonstrate how a contextualized view of local history is necessary for understanding the micro-socioeconomic development of Walongchung to its later prosperity. We want to remind the reader that the macro-conditions had a direct impact on the households' economy. In all war-crises trade was totally blocked, the traders, along with other locals, were conscripted into the army. Villagers had to pay high taxes for the war funds and supply troops with local natural resources and products. Furthermore, they were required to raise and finance a permanent yak herd for the use of the government in war times. In peace times, however, the Kathmandu Durbar's interest was to appropriate land and trade revenues collected by the village headman or later on administrators.

3. The Micro-Socioeconomic Development to 1960

3.1. Sources

In contrast to most of the other Nepalese groups, the people living in the mountain region of Walongchung Gola had not yet been studied in detail. Sir J. D. Hooker in 1850 was the first European who visited Walongchung. Furer-Haimendorf was the second. In his own words, he made 'relatively superficial observations during an exploratory survey in 1957' (1975). The third short account of the Bothiyas of easternmost Nepal was made by D.B. Bista (1972), Furer-Haimendorf's research assistant on the same tour. In a fourth source (Gurung 1980) we find a short note on Walongchung people having migrated to Hile Bazar in the midlands of East Nepal. Therefore, this paper is mainly based on our own fieldnotes together with the above mentioned sources plus some documents (Regmi Research Series, varia).

3.2. History

The village of Holung is said to be 230 years old. No written sources, however, are available from the time before Nepalese unification and chiefdoms seem to have existed in the upper Arun and Tamur valleys. From oral tradition we may reconstruct the traditional hierarchical social order of Walongchung Gola and some local historical background.

As in many other trans-Himalayan trading communities, the ancestors of the Walongchung Bothiyas migrated from Tibet and settled in the Tamur valley some centuries ago. According to our main informant, the Walongchung Bothiyas are socially divided into three classes based on the sequence of settlement. These classes are somewhat comparable to the Tibetan social organization or, according to FÜRER-Haimendorf, to the Sherpas. The earliest settlers were called *sat phasing*, meaning seven families, in Nepali terms known as Ukyaba, Ruta, Barowa, Mutaka, Khunchana, Goya and Chhusarpa. These seven families are said to have migrated from Tibet some centuries ago, and most of them are believed to have been herdsmen. Eventually the seven lineages ramified into sixty families which constitute the *sichhaba class* (tib: permanent settlers), also mentioned under their short name *shiva*. They hold the highest rank, and from this class all office bearers were chosen. The famous Buddhist monastery in Walongchung known as Dikichholding is said to have been built by the *sat phasing*.

The medium class of the Walongchung Bothiyas form the *pö-ta-va* (short form: *pheza*) meaning 'coming from Tibet'. They are supposed to have been the second settlers and their descendants constitute the majority of their society.

In lowest class are the *longme*, also called *lungme*, those, who 'do not belong to anywhere', in Tibetan also meaning *beggar*. They were the last settlers. The three classes correspond, in general, with differences in economic status (see later).

After the eastern expansion of Prithvi Narayan Shah the question arose whether this eastern area from Tibet up to India, formerly belonged to or was tributary to Nepal, Tibet or Sikkim. The opinions differed:

In 1850 A. D. Sir J. D. Hooker mentions that in all respects of appearance, religion, manners, customs and language, the Walongchung people were Tibetans and Lama Buddhists, but they paid tax to Nepal and the Sikkimese rajahs (1905: 150).

In 1858 A. D., however, Oldfield writes, that the district lying on the eastern or left bank of the Arun (i. e. also Walongchung Gola) and extending from it to Sikkim's present boundary, the Mechi river, is Limbuana or the country of the Limbus, another tribe of low caste Hindus, who are the southern neighbours of the Walongchung Bothiyas. He mentions that the country formerly belonged to Sikkim, but was conquered and permanently annexed to Nepal by Prithvi Narayan Shah (Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894, repr. 1972: 2).

To clear up this question, King Rana Bahadur Shah wrote a letter to Purananda Upadhyaya, the local administrator in the Morang area as early as 1793:

"So far as the question of the boundary is concerned, we had sent an order previously also. Collect the following information and send a report to us –

What were the boundaries between Sikkim and the Makwane (kingdom) during the regime of the Hindupati (kings)? What (tribute) did the Makwane (kings) get from Sikkim? Did the kings who ruled there at the time of our conquest take anything from Sikkim or not? What were the boundaries of their kingdom?

After our conquest of Vijayapur, but before the conquest of Sikkim, what were our boundaries with Sikkim?" (Regmi Research Series, Year 3, No 12, Dec. 1, 1971: 279)

We do not know the administrator's answer to these questions which refer more to Southeast Nepal, but we must keep in mind that territorial annexation legitimized revenue appropriation, one source of these state revenues being trade. As the same trade route led from Morang to Walongchung Gola, these questions were also relevant for our field of study. Walongchung Gola was culturally under the influence of Tibet, Sikkim and Nepal. Here the question of territorial status could only be solved by the help of the Walongchung people themselves. At the beginning of the 19th century, one of the *shiva*, Sona Ukiewa, was able to give evidence to the Nepalese government that Walongchung had always belonged to Nepal. As a result of his testimony, Sona Ukiewa received the title *gova* (village headman) of the five villages in Walongchung Gola (Yangme, Lungthung, Lelep, Gunsa, Walongchung) with Walongchung as the center.

In contrast to Fürer-Haimendorf (1975: 127) who believes that the title was not only issued to the senior man of this particular lineage, as presented by sixteen houses in 1957, but also to other prominent members, our informant mentions that only the oldest son of the *gova* could claim the title after the death of his father. Sometimes some lineage members may locally have been called *gova* as a sign of respect, although they had no official functions.

The descent of *govas* in the Ukiewa lineage was: Gova Sona who got the *lalmohar* (privilege) in 1841 A. D., followed by *gova* Gyanchen, *gova* Landen and *gova* Dorjee. With the introduction of the panchayat system the *gova* functions were abolished after the fourth *gova*. Comparable to the Thakali *subba* title, the *gova* descendants who could have claimed the title are called *gova* up to now, although they do not exercise *gova* functions any more.

3.3. Functions of the *gova* and other Village Officials

Before a *jjaradar*, a governmental customs contractor, and a customs post were established in Walongchung Gola in 1941 A. D., the *gova* was responsible for the task of revenue collection under the *thek-titi* system (see document 2, App.) in the five villages mentioned above. A document signed by Rajendra Vikram Shah and

the regional administrators, *subbas* Rupihan and Hamsaguru in 1898 (1841 A. D.), regulated the *gova's* tasks and rights (see document 1, App.).

The *gova* took over the functions of fulfilling the orders of the government and for sending petitions to Kathmandu in cases where he wanted to have such a royal order abolished or changed (the documents in the appendix give examples of such cases). But the contact between *gova* and government was infrequent and normally limited to letters, the local power of the *gova* being rather independent from Kathmandu. One situation is still remembered in Walongchung: The *gova* sent a report to the government that some Walongchung people had been recruited into the Tibetan army. The reaction of the Rana Prime Minister was the following order: 'Go to Tibet. Have a look and see if they are making war preparations...' (fieldnotes).

To help him in conducting the village affairs and to enable him to fulfill his administrative tasks, the *gova* could appoint the following other village officials (see document 1, App.) who then had to be confirmed by the government:

- a *kaji*, the assistant, who was also a very powerful man within Walongchung Gola and one case is mentioned that a *kaji* struggled with the *gova* for local leadership;
- a *vicari*, who was the scribe of the village and whose title was, according to Fürer-Haimendorf, hereditary in a lineage represented by five houses. Probably this official was not merely an assistant of the *gova* but in certain spheres, especially the economy, he exerted influence of his own. Thus in 1957 the vicari of Walongchung also held the position of phembu (village headman) of Thudam (1975: 128);
- a *neiki*, some kind of organizer of the instructions; and similarly
- a *majhiya*.

These five village officials met frequently to regulate village affairs for the five villages, discuss civil cases and, in war times, to organize war preparations in Walongchung Gola. In the absence of the other officials the *gova* would be the sole decision maker.

All the local officials were paid formal respect by the villagers. Even when the government introduced a customs- and check post with governmental officials who were 'strangers' in the Walongchung society, the *gova* retained a good deal of autonomy, although the tasks and power of the village officials were reduced.

The *gova* settled village disputes and he possessed some wider judicial power. Probably as a result of the personal power, and even coercion, of the *gova* only in the rarest cases was it necessary to contact the nearest governmental judge. The *gova's* power may be illustrated by the following example: If there was a conflict between the *gova* and another village official the *gova* would solve this problem – like in the case of the above mentioned *kaji* – by reporting to Kathmandu that the

official in question had left the region. His name was taken out of the register and the *gova* could choose another village functionary whom he preferred. But the authority of the *gova* was never called in question by the villagers.

3.4. The Social and Religious Life in Walongchung Gola

According to our informants the social and religious life in Walongchung was very similar to the folk culture customs of Tibet. Polyandry was very often found in these pastoral and trading communities, and also the levirate, where after the death of an elder brother his younger brother took the widow as his second wife into his family, was common up to the beginning of our century when Kathmandu made a law against these practices.

The basic economic unit was the nuclear family. Marriages took place only within the classes earlier mentioned, partly arranged, partly free. In 1956 Fürer-Haimendorf, however, recognized a case of intermarriage between less wealthy *shiva* and *pheza* (1975: 126). The *longme*, however, were treated like outsiders in the marriage system. Many matrimonial relations existed with nearby Tibetan villages and towns. The preference in Walongchung for marriage with Tibetan girls may be partly explained by a very strong incest tabu (in the male line seven, in the female line only three or four generations were excluded), partly by economic interests of the *shiva* in establishing kinship-links to Tibetan commercial centers like Shigatse. In this way, Tibetan girls married Walongchung boys, and also some Walongchung people – boys and girls – married into Tibetan communities. For the choice of the spouse, astrological divinations, provided by the lama, played an important role.

Usually the eldest son inherited the parents' property and cared for his old parents – a pattern not comparable to Hindu societies, but one advantageous for big commercial enterprises handed down from generation to generation. In cases where no son but only a married daughter existed, her husband took over the inheritance.

The occupation chosen for the sons also conformed to the Tibetan standard, with one son becoming a monk, another trader, etc.. In the same way, rituals in general had Tibetan roots, but were also influenced by Walongchung's earlier strong Sikkimese relations and by the neighboring Hinduized Limbuan area. In the wedding ceremonies, for example, the custom of using a pig's head was adopted, and Limbuan dialects were frequently spoken.

The feasts celebrated in Walongchung Gola mostly had religious character and were associated with the Tibetan calendar. On the other hand, the Nepalese government exerted some influence on religious life through the imposition of Hindu

religious law (e. g. the ban of cow slaughtering or the requirement to celebrate Dassain (Durga Puja), the highest Hindu festival of Nepal, on which the *gova* had to give *tika*, a red mark on the 'third eye' between the eyebrows).

The three classes mentioned above were mostly restricted to some social purity aspects of everyday-life like the marriage system, sexual relations or the traditional refusal of *shiva* and *pheza* to share the same drinking vessel – although this barrier is starting to be ignored nowadays (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 126). It includes the refusal of these two higher classes to drink from the same cup as *longme*, a custom which is in use even today, although they are allowed to take food prepared by lower ranking people and eat together.

Originally *shiva* and *pheza* inhabited different quarters of the village, but after a great fire at the beginning of this century the new houses are interspersed (op. cit.: 126).

On the other hand, the classes are according to the Tibetan norm not comparable to the caste-system of orthodox Hinduism, the combination of class and profession. Everybody could freely choose an occupation that was not restricted by ecological factors. In practice, however, although we also find exceptions among the *gova* lineage of Walongchung, social status corresponds with economic stratification. The *shiva* had a basic economic advantage on account of their priority of settlement, by which they could claim the best land and by their linkage to the political power in the villages. The *pheza* correlate economically to the medium stratum and the *longme* were landless and normally worked for the higher classes.

According to Bista (1967: 175) each social category consisted of a number of families having a common main house called *manang*, where they used to gather every month for *lhasu*, worship to insure the general welfare, and at times of feasting. Even today on high religious festivals like *futu* or *meso*, when Walongchung people who have migrated permanently return to their home villages, the social classification may be noticed. For each stratum a separate tent will be built up.

3.5. The Economic Life in Walongchung Gola

In 1850 Hooker described Walongchung as a populous village of about 100 houses (1905: 150). In 1957 Fürer-Haimendorf found the settlement to be nearly the same size, describing Walongchung more like a small town than a village (1975: 124). Our informant reports a number of 300 houses for the whole Walongchung Gola (i. e. the five villages) in the times of Walongchung prosperity before the 1960s. (By the 1970s the situation had totally changed, see below. We were not allowed to visit Walongchung Gola, as this area in the Tibetan borderland has been declared restricted.)

In 1957 Fürer-Haimendorf had the following impression of Walongchung village:

"The houses stand in broad, paved streets and there is hardly a vegetable plot or even a tree to counteract the impression of an urban settlement. Some rivulets running through the street serve as natural drains, and large numbers of pigs roaming the street act as scavengers. The houses built of stone and wooden planks, are much bigger than those of any other Bothiya community in the region of Arun and Tamur; some may be compared with Sherpa houses of Khumbu, both in size and the luxury furnishing. Inside the village are large numbers of many walls and rows of attractively painted square houses containing water driven prayer wheels. On a ledge above the village stands the large Buddhist gumpa and clinging to the hill-slopes are several small houses where lamas stay at the time of festivals and extended ceremonies. With the exception of the verger, they normally live in the village.

Outside the village there are a few kitchen gardens and some enclosed pastures for the packanimals of visiting traders." (1975: 124).

The internal design of a double storied house of an average trader in Walongchung is such that the whole groundfloor serves as a big store room for all the foodgrains and salt. Here sometimes a few animals are kept, but normally they are outside the village on the grazing land. In the first floor the kitchen forms the central unit, in which a big fire is kept burning in an oven, and from this room all other rooms, including separate bedrooms, worship room, store rooms etc., may be entered.

In the period of Walongchung's prosperity the people were said to be commercially-minded but diligent and self-reliant in their behaviour. They hardly used such things as foreign made shoes and clothes in their daily life, although they sometimes traded these items. Locally trained tailors and shoemakers were engaged in producing items of traditional dress from unprocessed materials like raw cotton, imported from India, or out of raw wool from Tibet.

3.5.1. Trade

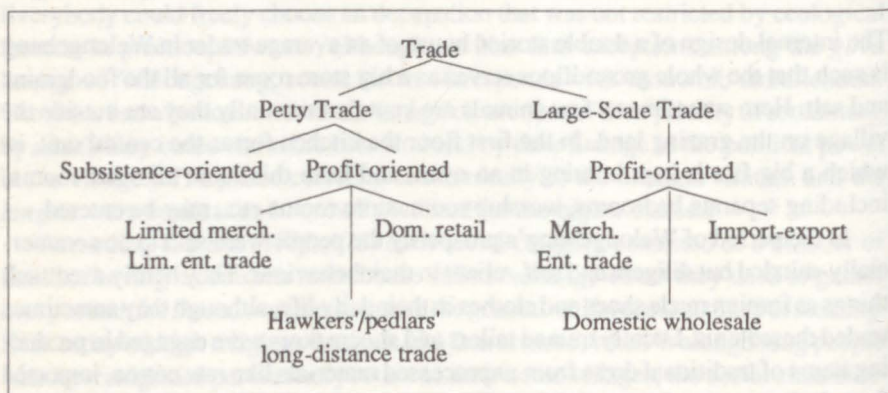
Like many other villages in the deep river valleys that break through the Himalayas from the Tibetan plateau to the Ganga plain, Walongchung occupied a strategic position for trade before the 1960s. We earlier called the village a trading entrepot between Tibet and East Nepal, and, although this description partly fits, it is too narrow to fully explain the complex Walongchung trading pattern.

Let us start with the four outer villages in Walongchung Gola (Yangme, Lungthung, Lelep and Gunsä). They depended on the combination of different

income sources in a mixed economy: Cultivation (mainly potatoes), animal husbandry, collection of natural resources like firewood, some limited petty trade, exchanging self-produce like potatoes against foodgrains from the lowlands, occasional petty trade in livestock and services for the Walongchung traders (e. g. porters). Up to now their economy has not changed with the exception of the services, as the wealthy Walongchung families have largely moved to the urban areas. The economy could be considered as subsistence economy.

The village of Walongchung, however, had only limited arable land insufficient for subsistence agro-pastoralism. For that reason the Walongchung population was more oriented towards trade, and agriculture played a minimal role in the households' economy. According to our informants, nearly all households were dependent on trade. We want to list up the trading activities of the Walongchung villagers according to the following categorization:

Fig. 2: Categorization of Trade



Subsistence-oriented petty trade we want to call that form of trade in which the trader deals with self-produce, be it subsistence products or even agricultural products raised for exchange. What the trader gets in exchange for his supply, flows to a great extent back into his own subsistence-budget. Exchange takes often place on a barter basis. Subsistence orientation, however, should not be interpreted as a trade form that generates no surplus.

Profit-oriented petty trade we want to call the form, in which producer and trader become separate units. The trader's goal becomes monetary profit, dependent on the market-situation. Items traded are consumer goods, foodstuffs and manufactured items of low value. The exchange takes place in monetary form on a retail basis.

Limited merchandising we want to call the subform of profit-oriented petty

trade, in which the trader operates between two markets, whereas his home village is one of these markets or lies in between, in contrast to *hawkers' and pedlars' long-distance trade*, in which external trading systems, more or less independent from the traders' home basis, are used. *Limited entrepot trade*, on the other hand, we call the form, in which the trader has an intermediary sedentary function. He does not organize transport and does not travel himself. His profits are made primarily by storage. *Domestic retail trade*, however, becomes only apparent in an integrated system of markets within a national economy.

Large-scale trade is profit-oriented per se. It differs from profit-oriented petty trade in the kind and value of items traded (primarily expensive luxury items) and the value of the trader's turnover that makes finance necessary. Furthermore, the business and the organization of transport generate the employment of agents, porters, caravans etc.. The trader's inclination towards trade as a profession becomes apparent.

Subforms of large-scale trade are: *Merchandising*, prototype of *domestic wholesale* and *import-export trade*, and large-scale *entrepot trade*, differing from that on small-scale basis in trade volume and turnover, but not necessarily in products traded.

Many (but often not all) of these patterns may appear among one trading community, and even a single household may be engaged in different patterns at the same time. Which patterns may we observe among the Walongchung Bothiyas?

3.5.1.1. Petty Trade

Subsistence-oriented petty trade in form of subsistence production or production for exchange could not be practiced because of natural limits of productivity.

Profit-oriented petty trade in form of limited merchandising was practiced almost by every household on a barter basis, and up to 1960 this income source was sufficient for most households to satisfy their basic needs. In summertime, when the pass was open, many male Walongchung villagers travelled to the next Tibetan villages Kudu and Sar, two days walk away, to buy or barter salt and wool in exchange for timber and southern products. The items were either transported by yak and crossbreeds or carried on the back.

As Walongchung is not permanently inhabited because of ecological reasons, in wintertime nearly all the villagers locked up their houses and went down to the lower southern valleys with their livestock. Here they did not own permanent houses but constructed temporary huts in Tapethok, Miltung, Dovan, etc. and conducted limited merchandising in the surrounding area with northern products obtained in

previous exchanges. However, they did not go as far as India.

On the other hand, some Tibetan caravans came down to Walongchung loaded with salt, wool, dried meat, Tibetan tea, etc. in exchange for southern products. These products had been brought up to Walongchung either by lowlanders in exchange for northern products in spring or autumn or by the Walongchung people after their winter journeys. They mostly consisted of rice, grain, and dried fruits.

Due to the seasonal time lags, storage, made simple by the unperishable trade items, was necessary in Walongchung. The mostly non-monetary profits from barter transactions were sufficient to provide a minimum living standard. The exchange with Tibetans and lowlanders at Walongchung and the storage of their products could be called limited entrepot trade and was mostly organized by the women, except for the wife of the *gova*, while their husbands were gone on additional trading trips to the North.

3.5.1.2. Large Scale Trade

Besides these smaller trading expeditions, large scale merchandising was carried out by only about 30 households out of the total Walongchung population, mainly *shiva*. These merchants were often specialized in animal trade. They used to buy horses in Tibet – maybe 40 or 50 at a time – and sell them in the plains and even across the border into India, where horses were in high demand as a means of transportation before the construction of roads. Also crossbreed cows were bought in Solu area and sold in Tibet. Besides this lucrative trade in livestock, luxury items were traded: Indian textiles and luxury products from Indian markets and

“also a variety of commodities from overseas countries in demand among wealthy Tibetans. In front of the home of (those, H. S.) traders one could watch yak being loaded with bags and boxes bearing a multitude of different imprints. Thus a large number of boxes containing tinned milk made in Denmark were loaded to yak bound for Shigatse where the sweetened milk was to be sold as a luxury food. All these goods had reached the Indo-Nepal border by rail and Dharan by truck. From there they were transported by porters to Walongchung and then transferred to yak” (Füer-Haimendorf 1975: 125, observed in 1957).

These traders were away from Walongchung three quarters of the year. The whole summer they traded up to Shigatse, but not, according to my informants, to Lhasa as Füer-Haimendorf maintains (1975: 125), and the whole winter was spent in Southeast Nepal and North India. They sometimes travelled as far as Calcutta, after conducting successful animal trade in the lowlands to purchase trade items and

organize the transport. All in all they were at home in Walongchung for only two or three months of the year. This kind of long-distance trade was mainly organized individually. In the few cases in which a loan was given to another trader within or outside the village, this trader was taken into partnership as guaranty for loan. From the shared profits the loan was repaid with an interest rate. These partnerships were always part time, mostly seasonal. Sometimes loans were made across the northern border to Tibetan business friends or relatives by intermarriage, but business partnerships among kinsmen were very rare.

In contrast to petty trade, mainly conducted by means of barter, large scale trade was monetized from the beginning of our century onward and required a high investment. The Tibetan importers paid for larger deliveries with cheques drawn on Calcutta bank accounts, a method of paying the traders preferred because it reduced the danger of being robbed. Caravans, and particularly single traders carrying cash, were often attacked by streetrobbers both inside Tibet and in Nepal's border area. Only a few months before Fürer-Haimendorf visited Walongchung in the 1950s, two Walongchung traders had been murdered on the way, and some years previously six Walongchung men had lost their lives under similar circumstances in Tibet. Such incidents remind one that the men engaged in long-distance trade needed not only business acumen but also courage and determination in the face of many hazards (Fürer-Haimendorf 1975: 125).

Although theoretically members of every class were allowed to enter into large scale business, in reality however, the wealthier merchants belonged to the *shiva* class because starting that kind of business demanded a large amount of capital. The village officials mostly belonged to this group of traders, but we did not get materials, except in one case discussed later, indicating how far they used their administrative function to control the access to trade and success of other traders. Their time occupied with official duties, however, had no influence on their business affairs.

In summer the Bothiyas of Walongchung traded with Tibetans very similar to themselves in language, customs, manners and religion, and in winter with southern people, Hindus or Hinduized groups, very different in their way of living and even in their language. Did religion have any influence on business affairs?

According to one of our informants, business with Tibetans was much easier to handle than business with southern people in general and, especially, with Indians. The Tibetans were much less sophisticated in business methods than the southern people having connections to the Indian market, so that higher profits could be obtained in Tibet. Religion itself, however, we were told, had no influence on the business sphere.

Our question was answered by explanations referring to 'modernization' and

'technical progress', terms related to market system conditions. We might, however, also interpret these answers in a different way, with reference to the social context as long as we do not assume means-end economizing to be characteristic of all traders involved in these transactions. The cultural similarity between Tibet and Walongchung caused a confidential sphere – a kind of 'moral economy of trade' (cf. Scott 1976: 'Moral economy of the peasant') – in which business could be conducted with greater ease, while the cultural dissimilarity between South Nepal and Walongchung made these southern people distrust the 'strange' northern people. As the Tibetans, however, were culturally not identical to Walongchung people and Walongchung traders considered themselves to be Nepali, they used the cultural similarity and the confidential sphere to gain higher profits from the 'backward' Tibetans without getting into conflict with their own moral code which is only binding within their own community. We refer to Aristoteles' 'natural price' (Polanyi 1979: 179). The distrust of the southern people, on the other hand, made high profits in these culturally foreign places impossible.

3.5.2. Animal Husbandry

Animal husbandry (yak, crossbreeds) was the second pillar of Walongchung's economy and practiced generally on small scale for subsistence (dairy and meat production). The wealthier merchants also possessed a flock of yak and crossbreeds for transportation for their journeys to Tibet and short distances south of Walongchung, as these animals can only be kept in high altitudes. For transportation purposes, castrated male or female yak and crossbreeds were most suitable.

Crossbreeding, however, was not possible because of ecological restrictions, so that the animals had to be bought, mostly from Solu area.

Animal trade in crossbreeds and horses was only conducted by large scale merchants.

Beside these private animals a herd of 500 governmental yak had to be kept for war times, and financed by the villagers, during the late 19th and early 20th century:

"We had been using these yak for the transportation of goods for trade with Tibet. However, a Tibetan called Derukpa has stopped all traffic at a place called Tashitakasara, and thus prevented us from engaging in trade.

We have been maintaining castrated yaks for providing transportation services to the government when required. We do not maintain any bulls. When any of our castrated yaks die or get lost, we have to replace them through purchases with the proceeds of cash levy collected from each Bhote household in our five villages" (Regmi Research Series,

Year 13, No. 2, 1981; Document sent by Wangchuk Bhote to Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere in Ashadh 1968 (June 1911). For the whole document and explanatory notes see doc. 3, Appendix).

3.6. Education as Human Capital

Education beyond the lowest primary grades in Walongchung began very late, in the middle of the 20th century, and the people had to send their children to a Darjeeling High School, since at that time the Nepalese higher education system had only been established in Kathmandu. The capital, however, was much more difficult to reach than the neighboring Indian territory.

Before those days in Walongchung people had managed their businesses, without any formal education, in Tibet, Nepal and India, where a variety of languages and coin-systems were used. They did not even speak the Nepali language at all, but some local Nepalese dialects and Tibetan which is similar to the Walongchung dialect. They felt they were born for trade and an interest in formal education developed only gradually. According to our main informant his grandfather asked his father: 'Why do you send your son to a Darjeeling school? There he won't learn anything about business!'

In the last fifteen years a primary education system has been slowly realized even in remote areas, so that children in the mountain regions can obtain some basic schooling. But especially the migration after 1960 to more infrastructurally developed areas, changed the attitude of Walongchung people towards more education for the children (see migration).

3.7. Trade, Resource Mobilization and the State

How was the customs duty collection organized in Walongchung? As the new state's infrastructure was centralized in Kathmandu, traditional administration patterns of former chiefdoms or kingdoms had to be taken over on the local level, in order to collect duties and taxes for the government all over the country. On the village level the village headman – in Walongchung the *gova* – had to perform this task under the *thek-titi* system.

"The Guobah of Wallanchoon (sic) overtook us on the road; on his way (...) to collect the revenues of Yangma. He owns five considerable villages, and is said to pay a tax of 6,000 rupees (600 pounds) to the rajah of Nepal: this is no doubt a great exaggeration, but the revenues of such a position, near a pass frequented almost throughout the year, must be

considerable. Every yak going and coming is said to pay 1 s and every horse 4 s; cattle, sheep and ponies, land and wool are all taxed; he exports also quantities of timber to Tibet, and various articles from the plains of India" (Hooker 1905: 160, observed in 1850).

As the actual trade flows in the national periphery could not be measured by the ruling elites in the center, the *gova* had to transfer a fixum per annum with high inflation rate, determined by the Kathmandu Durbar, and not a percentage taxation. The *gova*, however, got the actual customs duties. Some documents exist showing petitions of the *gova* to Kathmandu because of taxation and customs (see appendix).

When the government recognized a high trade volume – and this happened in Walongchung around 1900 A. D. when the *kaji* referred to above, who got into conflict with the *gova*, sent a report to Kathmandu – the customs duty collection system was changed: The *jjara* system, under which the semi-governmental function of customs collector was tax farmed, was introduced. In Walongchung Gola – and this is very unusual for village elites – the *gova* never made a bid for the customs contractor's position. It was either people from the eastern lowlands, or a wealthy brahmin from Palpa, who tax farmed the contractor's title. One informant, descendent of the *gova* line, gave the following explanation for that phenomenon: The *govas* were never interested in filling an administrative post within the state's bureaucracy. As village headmen they acted like independent kings in their home area and enjoyed a good deal of autonomy, as Hooker observed in 1850:

"I found that my rowing commission from the Nepal rajah was not respected, and the guard of the Gorkhas held very cheap (...). In the first place, the guobah disputed the Nepal rajah's authority to pass me through his dominions" (op. cit.: 151).

In 1957 Fürer-Haimendorf noticed that the headman of Walongchung moreover exerted an influence over the smaller villages of the region. Thus he used his authority to restrict the people of Thudam from selling their butter directly to Tibetans, and the *gova* insisted on purchasing the entire output at a fixed price, presumably to get a supply monopoly for resale to Tibet with a large profit (1975: 123).

The first *jjaradar* and customs post were introduced in Taplejung headquarter around 1900 A. D., in 1998 (1941 A. D.) also in Walongchung, and later, a sub-customs post in the village of Lungthung. A military check post followed. Because of these governmental institutions, the tasks and influences of the *gova* and the other traditional village authorities were reduced and many clashes arose between them and the new bureaucrats. The villagers are said to have been more accepting of the traditional system than of the new state authorities being strangers in Walongchung life. In this way the remaining influence of the *gova* in Fürer-Haimendorf's

observations is understandable. When the panchayat system was introduced in 2017 (1960 A. D.) the official tasks of the *gova* were totally abolished.

4. The Micro-Socioeconomic Events after 1960: Patterns of Adaptation

When we consider the adaptation patterns on the micro-socioeconomic level, we have to differentiate between two phases of change. The first one took place as a local reaction to infrastructural developments (the new trade route via Sikkim) and technical progress (Indian sea-salt production) from the beginning of our century onward.

While on small scale level we do not find active trade reorganization, a gradual orientation towards Kalimpong, Gantok and Darjeeling can be observed among the large scale traders. They began to organize their business on the new Phari route as soon as they were allowed, but they still lived in Walongchung Gola. A relative of our informant earned about 60,000 I. C. (Indian rupees) per annum in 1950 and was a wealthy merchant. Some poor families, however, had no other choice than to migrate to Darjeeling like so many Nepali in those days. The cause for their migration was an insufficient economic basis in Nepal, so that they were forced to find wage labour in British-India.

The second adaptation wave, however, began more abruptly with the Sino-Tibetan incidents in the late 1950s and the resulting closure of the border, and Walongchung never recovered her former property after the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Two additional factors made a quick local active response necessary. The first one was the Khampa activities against the Chinese army also carried out from a location near Walongchung. Unfortunately these Khampas often behaved like bandits harassing the local population, so that the small remaining black market petty trade across the closed border came to a halt and the villagers even felt unsafe in their houses. The second reason was a large landslide caused by the floods of the Tamur river in monsoon time, which not only destroyed many of the Walongchung houses, but also washed away the trade routes.

Most of the wealthier merchant families reacted by migration. According to Fürer-Haimendorf, in the early 1970s some 40 to 50 families formed a Walongchung cluster in Darjeeling, three or four, including the *gova* family, were living in Kathmandu and many others had founded a new settlement situated on an elevated plateau north of Dhankuta (1975: 130) in Hile Bazar, a new town (1920m) with a dozen new houses and a *gomba* at its southern end. These Walongchung migrants do prosperous business at a place that is situated at the junction of routes from Dhankuta, Khandbari, Terhathum and Taplejung (Gurung 1980: 352, 353), nowa-

days linked to the Nepalese road system, and here they conduct a kind of entrepot trade for the mountain region.

According to our informants, presently about 20 families make their living in Hile and 20 to 30 in Kathmandu, in Darjeeling more than 50. In Walongchung, however, no more than 26 families are present. Having once been a small town, with more than 2.000 inhabitants at the beginning of our century, Walongchung only remains a small village of mostly locked and empty houses and inhabited by no more than one tenth of the former population. The people who still live there, are the poor, for whom trade never was more than a subsidiary income or who were working for the wealthier merchants. They continue petty trade on barter basis, again across the Tibetan border, and Fürer-Haimendorf was told in 1972, that they are relatively better off than before, probably because they can trade without being subjected to the restrictions of former village officials and the competition of the wealthier merchants. They even import some salt from Tibet. The Walongchung Bothiyas go across the Tipta pass to a Tibetan village called Riu, and there they sell grain and some Tibetan-style clothes obtained from Kalimpong, and purchase salt and small quantities of wool. Even animal trade seems to work again: Walongchung people purchase crossbreeds in Solu and sell them in Tibet for a doubled price. Among the valuables given by the Tibetans in exchange are semiprecious stones and various ornaments. It seems that such articles are still obtainable from individual Tibetans and ultimately find their way to the tourist market in India and Kathmandu (1975: 130, 131).

The four outer villages were hardly touched by migration, as trade always played a minor role in their economy. The migrants were the wealthier families of Walongchung doing trade as their primary income source. As they all have been commercially minded for generations and had got some capital basis before the migration, they could soon start business in Hile Bazer, selling Indian cottage products and other imported things to people in the eastern hills and the mountain area who come down to the new regional entrepot. Other migrated Walongchung Bothiyas became involved in the highly profitable contracting business in Kathmandu. The trading places, the products and the organization have changed but not the trading mentality. Some highly educated people, especially from the *gova* lineage, also entered politics, administration, and military services.

By migration and the nowadays closer contact to the Nepalese state and its public institutions the resistance to higher education is past, so that, besides commercial occupations, we will more and more find administrative or self-employed professions like doctors, civil engineers etc. among the Walongchung people.

Tourism, however, which could have closed the income gap caused by trade deficits, did not provide a new income basis in Walongchung Gola. Although the

mountains northeast of Walongchung (Kanchenjunga, 28,170ft, on the Sikkimese border) began to attract Western expeditions which started from Nepalese territory in 1954, the Walongchung people never entered mountaineering business as they do not feel suited for such tasks. Therefore, mountaineering business in this region was taken over by the Sherpas, who, before 1954, operated from Darjeeling via Sikkim or Tibet, later from their home region Khumbu all over Nepal. After trekking businesses started at the beginning of the 1960s, Walongchung lost out on the chance to develop tourism, because this area, as most areas in the Tibetan borderland, has been declared restricted. This is the reason, why the migration rate among the Walongchung people is very high and the area has remained more backward than comparable areas like Khumbu.

Being spread out over Darjeeling, East Nepal and Kathmandu, the Walongchung people try to maintain close linkages. Twice a year they meet for two Buddhist festivals (*futu* and *meso*) in Walongchung Gola. Three big tents according to the three classes are erected. For an efficient organization of these festivals the whole village population is divided into several teams which take annual turns collecting a fixed amount of foodgrains from the locals and then managing the whole affair. Ancestors laid down the rules and regulations in a document. According to our main informant the text begins:

'Those who work for public sake, will go to heaven, those who only care for themselves, will go to hell!'

References

- Bista, D. B., 1967, *Peoples of Nepal*, Calcutta
 Fürer-Haimendorf, C. v., 1975, *Himalayan Traders*, London
Gazetteer of Sikkim, 1894, repr. 1972, New Delhi
 Hooker, J. D., 1905 (2nd ed.), *Himalayan Journals or Notes of a Naturalist in Bengal, the Sikkim and Nepal Himalayas, the Khasia Mountains, etc.*,
 Manzardo, A. E., 1977, Ecological Constraints of Trans-Himalayan Trade in Nepal, *Contributions to Nepalese Studies*, Vol. 4, No 2, pp 63- 81,
 Polanyi, K., 1979, *Ökonomie und Gesellschaft*, Frankfurt/M.
 Regmi, M. C., 1984, *The State and Economic Surplus*, Varanasi
Regmi Research Series, 1976, Year 8, No 7, Kathmandu
 — 1981, Year 13, No 2, Kathmandu
 — 1983, Year 15, No 3, Kathmandu
 Scott, J. C., 1976, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, New Haven/Conn.

Uhatri, R., 2037 (A. D. 1980), *Mero Bhot-Dosandhiko Anubhav (My Experience at the Tibetan border)*, Balaju, Kathmandu

Upreti, P. R., 1980, *Nepal-Tibet Relations 1850 – 1930*, Kathmandu

Appendix: Documents

- 1) Order of King R. V. Shah to Gova Sona Ukiewa from Walongchung Gola in 1841 A. D. "Hail to His Royal Majesty, the crest-jewel of mountain kings, the Narayana among men, etc., shining with a row of manifold praises, high in honor, the noble supreme king of great kings, three times royal, the great king Rajendra Vikrama Saha, who is brave, a sword in battle and ever victorious in war.

O Tendu Bothiya, Gova Sunalvyap, Vicari Kunduk Bothiya, Tamlin Majhiya, Namjya Bothiya Majhiya, Nupu Bothiya – and Khamvacca Bothiya Majhiya! The subbas Rupihan and Hamsaguru and my name appear on the same royal document, the formerly drawn up thekka document of the 1st day of the dark half of the month of Baisakh in the istak year 1898, pertaining to the houses, homesteads, dry fields, rice fields, pastures, titya, bee cliffs and surroundings, which your fathers have enjoyed the fruits of, cultivated and borne the costs of for generations: In the place in Walongchung along the Tamur river in the territory of Cainpur District which the Bhotiyas of the five villages inhabit. We three persons could not agree on money matters, so the company's finances have come to a halt. Through Captain Ripumardan Thapa you have sent to me the petition and it has become known that discussions having taken place at the headquarters of Platoon X, the two subbas wrote an affidavit in which they made the royal contract to collect duties over into your name, telling you to take charge of the financing and operation of it. You said, "If the royal contract is taken from the Limbu subbas, we, your subjects, agree to increase the thekka by 25 rupees and to bear the cost of maintaining the company". The examiner carried out an audit and apart from the thekka related to new and old registered Bothiya houses, the Saun and Phagu taxes, arsenals, appropriate customs, fines, cases of dying sonless, sexual offence, appropriate house taxes and putting up visiting officials, he set aside those relating to unclaimed buried treasure, claims to property flying over or rolling across one's land, elephant tusks, rhinoceros horns, the horns of cows and bulls, the circle of successive heads of temples, taxes on water, taxes on woodlands, additional sums for the Head District Office resulting from orders coming from me, the arsenal of ex-servicemen, the Saun and Phagu taxes, court taxes, roof taxes, taxes on family and individual, murder accusations, killing of cows and the king's portion, and he declared the accounts of official sums.

Pay, therefore, to Platoon X the thekka registered in the audit for the year 1884, the increased sum of NC 851 deriving from the audit of house rates for the year 1891 and, each year, the total unexempted sum of NC 876 together with NC 25 for the four-month winter tax raised in the year 1897, but not counting the former winter tax in Walongchung Gola. If, for reasons of crimes or accusations, any of your brothers or relatives should leave his own place of dwelling and go to live in another jurisdiction, in overgrown areas, on

freehold land (inheritable or noninheritable), on Guthi land or to Ilam, then accept it as your duty to settle their accounts. Carry to your respective wards loads pertaining to the government treasury, consignments of money to the central bank, office treasuries, supplies for the platoons and companies living in forts, and the post. If anyone comes or goes across the border for the purpose of spying around without written authorization and without the instructions of a high official, arrest him and take him to the *amali* (i. e. a subordinate judge, H. S.) in Cainpur. If the *amali* exercises more force than is his duty according to the *thekka*, come and petition us.

Now that you have all submitted the former royal document to me, I have set forth the rules of the *thekka* and, apart from the account book of the camps, platoons and companies, have retained (your rights to, H. S.) land, customs and the titles of *gova*, *vicari* and *majhiya*. Inhabit and cultivate the land. If anyone causes harm or greater rates of payment within the framework of these rules, and if anyone *mojahim garya*, he will be subject to heavy punishment. Collect the revenue with a detailed accounting of debits and credits, pay the *thekka* money in accordance with the rates of installment, and receive yearly the final receipt. Known that I am true to my word, and you yourself enjoy in a good faith the *thekka* knowing its management of levies"

(translated from Uhatri 2037 V. S. (1980 A. D.): 63-65, referring to the year 1841 A. D.).

Explanatory notes

Thek-titi system: Introduced by the Gorkhali rulers. The village headman, here the *gova*, paid a stipulated amount of revenues to the state on contractual basis on behalf of the village community. In return, he was allowed to collect revenues from specified sources, maintain law and order and administration justice (Regmi 1984: 35).

Jjara-system: Tax and duty collection was tax farmed.

- 2) Document referring to revenue collection in Walongchung Gola in Vikram 1925 to 1929 (1868 to 1872 A. D.)

Source: Regmi Research Collection, Vol. 62, pp 74-78, in: Regmi Research Series, Year 15, No 3, Kathmandu, 1983

Revenue Collection from Olangchung-Gola

During the revenue settlements of Vikrama 1925-29 (A. D. 1868 - 1872), revenue from 5 villages under the jurisdiction of the Olangchung-Gola was assessed at Mohar Rs 1026. The settlement was revised in Vikrama 1937 (A. D. 1880) and the assessment was raised by Rs 78 - 13.

Landen Bhote, who was responsible for the payment of this amount under the *thek-titi* system, requested that the old assessment figure be restored.

The local administrator, Bambir Bikram Rana, expressed the following opinion on Landen Bhote's request: "Olangchung-Gola is situated on the border with Tibet. It has a snowy climate, where crops cannot be raised. The people of this area depend solely on agriculture for their livelihood. When the A. D. 1868 revenue settlement had been made, the number of households was found to have declined, hence the assessment was fixed at Mohar Rs 1026. During the revenue settlement of A. D. 1880, however, the figure was raised by Rs 78 - 13 as if the local people were engaged in tilling the land for crops. If

people who have been persuaded to come over from the Tibetan side to settle in this area go back to Tibet because they are unable to pay the enhanced amount, it will not be collected, and, instead, the government will lose even the revenue that it was collecting before." Bambil Bikram Rana, therefore recommended that the old assessment figure of Mohar Rs 1,026 be restored.

The Sadar Dafdarkhana expressed the following opinion on the matter. "The A. D. 1872 revenue assessment order does not stipulate that revenue may not be enhanced during a fresh revenue settlement. Hence it will not be appropriate to recommend that the enhancement of Rs 78 - 13 be cancelled." This recommendation of the Sadar Dafdarkhana was endorsed by Mukli Adda, and sanctioned by Prime Minister Bir Shumshere on Shrawan Sudi 5, 1946 (July 1889).

Explanatory notes:

In those days, Walongchung Gola was remote region. The local administrator, B. B. Rana, had his office in Taplejung headquarter, five days walk away, so that he very seldom went up to Walongchung. As it was usual in remote areas, the Walongchung people tried to reduce their revenue payments by claiming to suffer hardship because of the climate.

- 3) Petition of *Gova Landen Bhote* of Walongchung Gola to the Prime Minister in Baisakh 29, 1964 (1906 A. D.)

Source: Regmi Research Series, Year 8, No 7, 1976

Order Regarding Revenue Collection in Olangchung-Gola
Baisakh 29, 1964

Gova Landen Bhote who had been granted a contract for the collection of revenue at Olangchung-Gola, submitted the following petition: -

"Taxes and levies due from the inhabitants of five villages in the Olangchung-Gola area had been remitted in consideration of the obligations imposed on them to construct tracks and roads, maintain 500 yaks, and provide one laborer from each household. In view of this remission, the value of the contract for the collection of revenue at Olangchung-Gola had been reduced by Rs 2,000. The inhabitants of these five villages had stipulated that in case the contractor did not agree to these arrangements, they would themselves undertake liability for the payment of the amount of the contract.

"Subsequently, the contractor, Bajahang, was unable to fulfill his contract and therefore relinquished it. The inhabitants of these five villages then stipulated that they would complete the arrears of payment within two years. Because we are illiterate, we failed to understand that the former contractor had stipulated full payment within three years. At current market prices, the value of the commodities due was calculated at Rs 26,037 and four annas.

"Because salt obtained from the plains is dear in the hills, whereas foodgrains are dear in the Darjeeling area, foodgrains from the hills are exported to the Moglan (India). However, the food on the Tamur river at Phembu has been washed away and trade has come to a stop. We have therefore paid Rs 12,460 and eight annas as the first installment. We now pray that we be allowed to make payment for commodities at the usual rate in three annual installment as follows: -

Jestha 1964 – Rs 8,500

Jestha 1965 – Rs 8,500

Final installment – Rs 9,037 and 4 annas.”

When this petition was referred to (the Prime Minister), he ordered that the time-limit be extended by one year. It was subsequently extended by two more years for the purpose of manas per indian rupees.

- 4) Petition of Wangchuk Bhote from Walongchung in Ashadh 1968 (June 1911) to the Prime Minister

Source: Regmi Research Series, Year 13, No 2, 1981

Petition of the Bhotes of Olangchung

In Ashadh 1968 (June 1911), Wangchuk Bhote of Olangchung-Gola in the East No. 5 district submitted the following petition to Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere:-

“Previously, a monopoly (hatti) had been introduced (for trade and revenue collection) in Olangchung-Gola. Because of that monopoly, the Bhote inhabitants of that area suffered considerable hardships. When we represented our grievances to the government, the monopoly was abolished and the old system was restored.

“Under that system, we had pledged to:

(a) Maintain 500 yaks in our area for use during war,

(b) Provide one porter from each household, and

(c) Maintain eight fords in our area at our own cost.

“Every year, the Dhankuta District Headquarters Office conducts an inspection to ensure that 500 yaks have been maintained and that the eight fords have been kept in condition.

“We had been using the yaks for the transportation of goods for trade with Tibet. However, a Tibetan called Derukpa has stopped all traffic at a place called Tashitakasara, and thus prevented us from engaging in trade.

“We have been maintaining castrated yaks for providing transportation services to the government when required. We do not maintain any bulls. When any of our castrated yaks die or get lost, we have to replace them through purchases with the proceeds of a cash levy collected from each Bhote household in our five villages. If we do not do so, action is taken against us by the Dhankuta District Headquarters Office. Accordingly, we are incurring heavy losses every year.

“Previously, we had been meeting these losses through the profits we earned from the trade with Tibet. But now the Tibetan has prohibited us from carrying on such trade.”

The petition then requested Prime Minister Chandra Shumshere to direct the Nepali Wakil in Lhasa to have the restrictions on trade imposed at Tashitakasara lifted.

On Shrawan 19, 1968 (August 3, 1911) the Prime Minister sent back the petition to the *Rakam Bandobast Adda* (Revenue Contract Administration Office) through Captain Bhogya Shumshere Thapa Chhetri with the order that no action need be taken on the petition.

Explanatory notes:

Wangchuck Bhote was *gova* Landen's youngest brother, but according to my informant, *gova* Landen himself wrote the petition under the name of Wangchuck. This pseudonym was chosen, when the petition accused governmental practices, so that the government could not blame the *gova* or take any actions against him.

The trade stop, mentioned in the document, was caused by the conflicts between Kathmandu and Lhasa concerning trade regulations at the beginning of this century.